

**WEEKLY INFORMATION PACKET
MEMORANDUM**

To: Mayor Ruzzin and Members of Council

From: Frank Bruno, City Manager
Stephanie Grainger, Deputy City Manager
Maureen Rait, Director of Public Works for Development and Support Services
Bill Boyes, Facilities and Fleet Manager
Jody Jacobson, Communications Coordinator for Public Works & Planning

Date: July 6, 2006

RE: Information Item: Update on the Valmont Butte Remediation Plan and Prairie Dog Removal

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The city of Boulder has received authorization from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) to go ahead with its remediation plan and prairie dog removal efforts at the Valmont Butte site.

In January and February 2006, tissue samples were collected from Valmont Butte prairie dogs and soil samples were taken from the area. The samples were tested to find out if the prairie dogs carried harmful levels of uranium, arsenic and lead from burrowing in and around the tailings ponds caps. The concern was that if relocated, the prairie dogs may create health problems in the food chain.

The levels found in the soil samples and in the soil buried externally in the prairie dog pelts were elevated as anticipated by previous soil testing. However, the tests on internal prairie dog tissues (liver and muscle tissue) found that the levels of these substances were minimal within the prairie dogs themselves.

The prairie dog removal process is expected to commence this fall after the city's Urban Wildlife Management Plan is considered by City Council (currently scheduled for Aug. 15). This timeline will also enable the Trust for Public Lands, who has expressed interest in purchasing the site, time to secure grant money for some of the site remediation. The prairie dogs must be removed from the tailings ponds cap areas and a barrier to prevent their return must be in place before the majority of remediation on the site can occur. The CDPHE has authorized the prairie dog relocation off site and has endorsed the city's proposed plan and relocation timeline.

BACKGROUND:

The Valmont Butte site is the location of a historic flotation mill that ran from the mid-1930s to 1985. Milling of fluorspar, silver and gold ore on the site generated tailings (milling waste

products), which were transferred to two tailings ponds. In 1994, the Valmont Butte Corporation covered the tailings ponds and reseeded the area.

The city purchased the 102-acre Valmont Butte site in 2000 and proposed building a fire training center and a biosolids composting center on portions of the site. In 2005, the City Council decided not to pursue the biosolids composting center at this time, and in early 2006, decided to pursue the fire training center at the Wells property. The city is now pursuing site remediation prior to selling the property. The Trust for Public Lands has expressed an interest in purchasing the property and is in the process of trying to secure funding.

Prairie Dogs:

Approximately 700 prairie dogs are currently on the entire site. In January and February 2006, tissue samples were collected from Valmont Butte prairie dogs and soil samples were taken from the area. The samples were tested to find out if the prairie dogs carried harmful levels of uranium, arsenic and lead from burrowing in and around the tailings ponds. The concern was that if relocated, the prairie dogs may create health problems in the food chain.

The levels found in the soil samples and in the soil buried externally in the prairie dog pelts were elevated as anticipated. The city's tests of soil samples and radiation levels were consistent with the EPA's 2005 soil testing. However, the tests on internal prairie dog tissues (liver and muscle tissue) found that the levels of these substances were minimal within the prairie dogs themselves. The prairie dogs were deemed safe for the food chain, and the CDPHE has authorized their relocation off site.

The prairie dogs must be removed from the tailings ponds areas and a barrier to prevent their return must be in place before the majority of remediation on the site can occur. The prairie dog removal process is expected to commence this fall after the city's Urban Wildlife Management Plan is considered by City Council (currently scheduled for Aug. 15). This timeline will also enable the Trust for Public Lands, who has expressed interest in purchasing the site, time to secure grant money for some site remediation. The CDPHE has approved the city's timeline for prairie dog removal and site remediation.

When removing prairie dogs, all city requirements will be met, and all reasonable efforts to relocate the prairie dogs will be explored. If a relocation site is found, the city will relocate all of the prairie dogs. If a relocation site cannot be found, lethal control will only be used on the prairie dogs that currently inhabit the tailings ponds (estimated to be at least 325); the prairie dogs outside of the tailings ponds would not be lethally controlled. A barrier will be put in place to try to keep the rest of the prairie dogs from infiltrating the tailings ponds again so that the city does not have to continue to relocate or lethally control them.

Prior to removing the prairie dogs, the city will announce a 30-day waiting period to allow members of the public time to locate a potential relocation site. If members of the public have state certified relocation sites to offer, they may submit information about the name, location and landowner during the 30-day waiting period.

NEXT STEPS:

Between now and fall 2006, some minor remediation work is proceeding on areas other than the tailings ponds, before the prairie dogs are removed. A number of storage drums and other materials were left on the site and are being removed. Facilities and Asset Management will soon contract for this minor removal work. No work on the tailings ponds caps will be done until after the prairie dogs are removed in the fall.

For more information, visit www.valmontbutte.net or contact Bill Boyes (303) 441-4125.